

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 OMB-01 TRSE-00 /068 W

-----090518Z 080968 /14

R 090016Z MAR 77

FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6438

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 KUALA LUMPUR 1446

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINT, PGOV, MY

SUBJECT: POLITICAL MANEUVERINGS: WHITHER DATUK HARUN?

REF: (A) KUALA LUMPUR 1091 (DTG 160845Z FEB 77)

(B) KUALA LUMPUR 0848 (DTG 080148Z FEB 77)

(C) KUALA LUMPUR 0713 (DTG 020313Z FEB 77) (NOTAL)

(D) KUALA LUMPUR 0559 (DTG 260029Z JAN 77)

1. SUMMARY. PROPONENTS OF OUSTED SELANGOR STATE
POLITICAL BOSS AND FOMER UMNO YOUTH HEAD DATUK HARUN
IDRIS HAVE EXPLOITED RECENT TELEVISED CONDESSIONS OF
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PRO-COMMUNIST ACTIVITIES BY FORMER ASSOCIATES OF LATE
PRIME MINISTER RAZAK AS PROOF HARUN IS VICTIM OF
COMMUNIST PLOT. HARUN HIMSELF IS INCREASINGLY
CONSPICUOUS AND HIS ACTIVITIES AND REMARKS
FEATURE PROMINENTLY IN NEW TABLOID "WATAN."
HOWEVER, THESE MOVES APPEAR MOTIVATED BY
DESPERATION AS HARUN'S LEGAL DIFFICULTIES MOUNT

AND THE PRIME MINISTER SHOWS NO INCLINATION TO INTERVENE IN THE LEGAL PROCESS IN HARUN'S FAVOR. NONETHELESS IT REMAINS CONCEIVABLE THAT THE STAKES IN THIS HIGH POWER GAME, WHICH NOW INVOLVES A NUMBER OF AMBITIOUS PERSONALITIES, MAY BECOME SO GREAT IN TERMS OF THREATS TO POLITICAL STABILITY, RACIAL PEACE AND PUBLIC ORDER THAT THE PRIME MINISTER MAY AT SOME POINT FEEL CONSTRAINED TO PARDON HARUN, OR AT LEAST COMMUTE HIS SENTENCE IN ORDER TO KEEP THIS POPULAR FIGURE OUT OF JAIL. END SUMMARY.

2. OVER THE PAST THREE WEEKS SUPPORTERS OF OUSTED FORMER UMNO YOUTH/SELANGOR STATE POLITICAL STRONGMAN DATUK HARUN IDRIS HAVE EXPLOITED RECENT TELEVISED CONFESSIONS OF FORMER DEPUTY MINISTERS ABDULLAH AHMAD AND ABDULLAH MAJID AS PROOF HARUN'S DOWNFALL RESULTED FROM COMMUNIST POLT. HARUN HAS STEPPED UP HIS APPEARANCES BEFORE POLITICAL GROUPS AND HIS REMARKS HAVE FEATURED PROMINENTLY IN EX-AMB-ASSADOR TO US KHIR JOHARI'S NEW TABLOID "WATAN." MEANWHILE HARUN'S LEGAL PROBLEMS HAVE CONTINUED TO MOUNT, AS ATTORNEY GENERAL HAS APPEALED "INADEQUACY" OF MOST RECENT JUDGMENT AGAINST HIM, AND A VARIETY OF OTHER CHARGES REMAIN OUTSTANDING.

3. HARUN'S FATE AND POLITICAL FUTURE HAVE BECOME PART OF A HIGH STAKES GAME INVOLVING RACIAL PEACE, GOVERNMENT STABILITY AND LINES
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OF SUCCESSION. OTHER POLITICIANS HAVE ALLIED THEMSELVES WITH HIM IN HOPES OF GAINING FROM HIS UNDENIABLY STRONG PERSONAL FOLLOWING. THERE IS A DISTINCT ELEMENT OF DESPERATION UNDERLYING THE TENACIOUS ATTEMPTS BY HARUN AND HIS BACKERS TO RETRIEVE A VERY DIFFICULT SITUATION. MANY FEAR THAT AT SOME POINT, LIKE SAMPSON, HE WILL NOT HESITATE TO PULL DOWN THE TEMPLE ABOUT HIM. HOWEVER, OPINION REMAINS DIVIDED WHETHER HARUN CAN ESCAPE JAIL OR REGAIN HIS PARTY AND PUBLIC OFFICES AND RESUME HIS ROLE AS A KEY CONTENDER FOR NATIONAL LEADERSHIP. HARUN'S SUPPORTERS, BOTH MALAY YOUTHS WHO PROVIDE HIS MOST VISIBLE ADHERENTS, AND HIS CURRENT POLITICAL ALLIES SUCH AS KHIR JOHARI AND EX-PRIME MINISTER TUNKU ABDUL RAHMAN, STRESS HARUN'S WORK ON BEHALF OF MALAYS AND HIS ANTI-COMMUNIST STANCE, CONVENIENTLY OVERLOOKING FACT HARUN IS A CONVICTED FELON, GUILTY OF MISAPPROPRIATING FUNDS FROM A BANK

THAT IS SUPPOSED TO BENEFIT THE MALAYS.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 KUALA LUMPUR 1446

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

4. MALAYSIA'S POLITICAL ETHOS PROVIDES
CONSIDERABLE SUPPORT FOR THIS LINE OF THINKING.
THE NATIONAL POLICY THAT MALAYS SHOULD BE
ADVANCED AT THE EXPENSE OF OTHER COMMUNITIES
REINFORCES AN AGE-OLD TRADITION THAT LEADERS
MAY ENRICH THEMSELVES WHILE IN PUBLIC OFFICE
IN THE PAST, THE FEW SENIOR POLITICIANS CAUGHT
WITH HANDS PUBLICLY IN THE COOKIE JAR HAVE BEEN
TRANSFERRED ABROAD FOR A PERIOD THEN REINSTATED
(E.G., PERAK CHIEF MINISTER GHAZALI JAWI).
MOREOVER, IT IS OBVIOUS THAT LATE PM RAZAK AND
HIS ASSOCIATES PRESSED HARUN'S INDICTMENT FOR
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GRAFT BECAUSE LATTER REFUSED TO GIVE UP HIS AMBITIONS TO SUCCEED RAZAK (IN FAVOR OF TENGKU RAZALEIGH) RATHER THAN BECAUSE THEY CONDEMNED HARUN'S DISHONESTY.

5. HOW HARUN'S STATUS WILL BE RESOLVED, BOTH LEGALLY AND POLITICALLY, REMAINS UNCLEAR. THE DEFENSE AND PROSECUTION APPEALS RELATING TO HIS BWO CONVICTIONS WILL TAKE SOME TIME, SOME SAY UP TO TWO YEARS, TO DECIDE. THE PRIME MINISTER, WHO REPUTEDLY ABHORS CORRUPTION, HAS SHOWN NO INCLINATION TO TAMPER WITH LEGAL PROCESSES NOW UNDERWAY AGAINST HARUN. HOWEVER, AT SOME POINT HUSSEIN WILL HAVE TO "BIT THE BULLET" AND FACE UP TO PRESSURES FOR A FULL PARDON OR COMMUTATION OF HARUN'S SENTENCE, OR ELSE ACQUIESCE IN SEEING THIS POPULAR FIGURE BEHIND BARS. OUR CRYSTAL BALL IS CLOUDY BUT WE FEEL IT IS UNLIKELY HARUN WILL END UP IN JAIL; IN THE END HE EITHER WILL BE PARDONED OR, MORE LIKELY, HAVE HIS SENTENCE COMMUTED (UNDER THE LATTER THE CONVICTIONS WOULD STILL STAND AND HE WOULD BE BARRED FROM PUBLIC OFFICE FOR FIVE YEARS). NONETHELESS, IT IS CONCEIVABLE THAT, IF PRESSURE FROM WITHIN UMNO INCREASES, DATUK HUSSEIN MIGHT HAVE TO PARDON HARUN IN ORDER TO PRESERVE POLITICAL STABILITY AND PUBLIC ORDER. UNDERHILL

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Message Attributes

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